

SUPPORT FOR THE SAFE  
COMMISSION**HON. FRANK R. WOLF**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 5, 2007*

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, earlier this year I reintroduced legislation in the House of Representatives aimed at addressing the looming financial crisis facing the Nation, the Securing America's Future Economy (SAFE) Commission Act. The bill would establish a national bipartisan commission that will put everything—entitlement spending as well as all other Federal programs and our Nation's tax policies—on the table and require Congress to vote up or down on its recommendations in their entirety, similar to the process set in 1988 to close military bases. Mandating congressional action on the panel's recommendations is what differentiates this commission from previous ones.

I submit for the RECORD an op-ed by Dr. Ed Feulner, President of the Heritage Foundation. Dr. Feulner believes that the SAFE Commission provides an opportunity to address this looming crisis. This legislation can provide a path toward a safe and secure economy for generations to come—a renaissance for America.

This legislation will be good for the future of America.

[From the Sun Times, Feb. 28, 2007]

WE NEED A NEW COMMISSION TO TACKLE  
ENTITLEMENT PROGRAMS

(By Ed Feulner)

In any policy battle, it helps to have allies. So it's good that AARP seems finally ready to help press for reform of entitlements such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

AARP's shift can be seen in its latest TV ad, "Future Champions." It shows children stressing the need to "find real long-term solutions to some of America's most pressing issues—health care and long-term financial security."

The ad is misleading in some ways. Speaking about entitlements, one boy asks, "Will we keep those promises?" when, of course, this child has made no promises. In fact, the big three entitlement programs are promises made by older generations—to give themselves benefits that younger workers will have to pay for through ever-rising payroll taxes.

But the overall message of the ad is that we need to make some big changes to fix entitlements. That's a refreshing change from two years ago. Back then, when President Bush was urging the creation of individual retirement accounts within Social Security, AARP's ads insisted, "If you had a problem with the kitchen sink, you wouldn't tear down the entire house," hinting that entitlement problems weren't all that bad.

But the organization now seems to understand that the country's on the verge of a fiscal catastrophe.

The Congressional Budget Office predicts that spending on Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid will soar from just over 8 percent of GDP today to almost 19 percent in 2050, when the cute children in today's TV ads will be middle-aged parents. Their bill will be gigantic: \$38 trillion to pay for the Social Security and Medicare benefits their parents have promised themselves—but not arranged to pay for. Add in the national debt and other entitlements, and it works out to \$440,000 for every household in the United

States today—enough to buy each of those families a new home. Or two.

So how can we fix things? Well, as we learned in the debate over Social Security, we can't simply take on one problem at a time. If we try to reform just one of the big programs, some group will always fight for the status quo. We need to fix all three at once.

Also, we need to give lawmakers some cover. To accomplish that, Congress should form a commission such as the one Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.) proposed last year. Wolf would label it "SAFE," for "Securing America's Future Economy." It would have 16 voting members, including at least four members of Congress, the director of the Office of Management and Budget and the secretary of the Treasury.

The commission would be bipartisan and have one year to develop plans to:

Fix the imbalance between long-term federal spending promises and projected revenues.

Boost national savings to spur domestic investment and economic growth.

Simplify the budget process to place greater emphasis on long-term fiscal issues.

The first thing the commission would do is leave Washington and discuss reform options with Americans. That should help it avoid the temptation to hatch some scheme behind closed committee-room doors. Plus, the members would surely find, as the Heritage Foundation has with our ongoing Fiscal Wake-Up Tour, a real desire out there to fix entitlement programs.

Once it reports to Congress, lawmakers would be required to hold a simple up-or-down vote on each of its recommendations. This should help break the legislative logjam. Just as base-closing commissions enabled lawmakers to shutter obsolete military bases (even those in their own districts or states), a SAFE Commission would help lawmakers make necessary changes without being accused of "destroying" entitlement programs.

Many of us over 50 realize that our generation, however inadvertently, created the coming entitlement crisis, and we understand it's up to us to solve it. AARP will be a welcome ally—if we can believe their ads. Establishing a SAFE Commission should help us find out.

SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND  
IDEALS OF A NATIONAL MEDAL  
OF HONOR DAY

SPEECH OF

**HON. SILVESTRE REYES**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 27, 2007*

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 47, observing National Medal of Honor Day and honoring the sacrifices of Medal of Honor recipients and their contributions to our Nation. March 25th is an appropriate day to recognize these individuals, since the first Medal of Honor was awarded on March 25, 1863.

This resolution not only salutes the bravery of Medal of Honor recipients, but also gives the American public the opportunity to learn about the history of this prestigious military distinction and the uncommon acts of courage that made recipients real-life heroes.

Previous honorees include several El Pasoans. Staff Sergeant Ambrosio Guillen was posthumously awarded the Medal of

Honor for going above and beyond the call of duty during the Korean War. Sergeant Guillen sacrificed his life in order to thwart an enemy attack, saving the lives of the men in his platoon. He was laid to rest at Fort Bliss National Cemetery.

Colonel Joseph C. Rodriguez was also awarded the Medal of Honor for his courageous actions in the Korean War. While facing a barrage of hostile fire and improbable odds, Colonel Rodriguez secured a strategic stronghold by killing 15 enemy soldiers occupying well-fortified positions. He later moved to El Paso following his retirement from the Army and served as Facilities Director at the University of Texas at El Paso for over 10 years.

Most recently, on April 4, 2005, Army Sergeant First Class Paul Ray Smith was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his "extraordinary heroism and uncommon valor" while repelling an enemy attack on a prisoner of war holding area during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Sergeant Smith quickly organized two Army platoons to defend their position. In the face of enemy fire, Smith manned a .50 caliber machine gun mounted on a damaged armored vehicle. Although exposed to enemy gunfire, Sergeant Smith maintained his position. His heroism resulted in the death of over 50 enemy soldiers before Sergeant Smith was mortally wounded during this courageous act.

As a Vietnam veteran, I recognize the importance of honoring these selfless acts of courage. In order to preserve their legacy and costly sacrifices, I proudly stand in support of our Medal of Honor recipients.

HONORING READ ACROSS  
AMERICA**HON. NICK J. RAHALL II**

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 5, 2007*

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, in May 1997, a small reading task force at National Education Association came up with a big idea. "Let's create a day to celebrate reading," the group decided. "We hold pep rallies to get kids excited about football—why don't we do something to get kids excited about reading? We'll call it 'NEA's Read Across America' and we'll celebrate it on Dr. Seuss's birthday." And so was born on March 2, 1998, the largest celebration of reading this country has ever seen.

To commemorate this special day, I recently joined third-graders at Coal City Elementary and read to them some of Dr. Seuss' more famous stories, including *The Cat in the Hat*, which marks its 50th anniversary this year. As always, it was a joy to spend some time with the students and their instructors, Sandra Snuffer, Donna Thomas and Janet Smith. I was inspired by the students' interest in learning, and encouraged by our educators' dedication to teaching them the importance of literacy.

Of course, as we all know, just as reading should not be confined to our classrooms, neither should our efforts to encourage literacy be confined to one single day of the year. As President Bill Clinton once said, "Literacy is not a luxury, it is a right and a responsibility. If our world is to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century we must harness the energy and creativity of all our citizens."